

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
México, D. F., May 22, 1944.4103 E E
FC

No. 17,686

SECRET

Maximum Priority PouchSubject: Russian Ambassador Constantin Oumansky; Activities;
Attitudes; AchievementsThe Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to submit the following report on the Ambassador of the Soviet Union in Mexico, Mr. Constantin Oumansky, covering his activities from his arrival here in June, 1943 to date.

I. BACKGROUND AND EVENTS LEADING UP TO RENEWAL OF
DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND MEXICO.

At the outset, it will be helpful to a proper understanding of this whole matter to bear in mind the events that led up to the renewal of formal diplomatic relations between Russia and Mexico and the attitudes of various sections of the Mexican people toward the Soviet Union.

The agreement between Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany of August, 1939, and the subsequent entry of Russian forces into Poland in the latter part of September of that year caused much the same reaction in Mexico that it caused in the United States, namely, persons who sympathized with the democracies and were opposed to aggression expressed disgust with Russian policy. Later in the same year Russia attacked Finland, and in December President Lázaro Cárdenas condemned the Russian aggression against Finland.

The extreme leftists, headed by Lombardo Toledano, were obviously hard put to explain the Soviet attitude, but they finally adopted the argument that the war was merely a struggle between capitalistic powers, and that Russia was simply being realistic.

During 1940 and the early part of 1941, leftist and labor groups in Mexico continued to view the war as a conflict in which the workers had no interest, although toward the end of this period there appeared a tendency to favor the democracies as against the totalitarian powers.

After the

P. J.

AIR MAIL

- 2 -

After the inauguration of President Manuel Avila Camacho on December 1, 1940 it quickly became apparent that the new Administration was fully in sympathy with the democracies. As regards Russia, the Mexican Government adopted a policy of cautious disinterest.

After the German invasion of Russia on June 22, 1941 the liberals and leftists, headed by Lombardo Toledano and Narciso Bassols, announced all-out support of Russia and called upon the Mexican Government to renew relations with the Soviet Union.

The Mexican Government continued to be cautious, and the Foreign Minister, Dr. Padilla, stated on June 24 that: "the aggression against the USSR by the German Army should not make us fall into confusions of an ideological character". (Consulate General's despatch of July 1, 1941, file no. 800-C).

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and the subsequent entry of the United States into the world conflict, the Mexican attitude toward Russia became more favorable. Meantime, Lombardo Toledano was actively campaigning for the renewal of relations between Russia and Mexico, and in May, 1942 he proceeded to Washington with the expressed purpose of calling on the Undersecretary of State, Mr. Sumner Welles. This was to have been arranged by the Minister-Counselor of the Mexican Embassy in Washington, Mr. Luis Quintanilla. Lombardo went to Washington, but he was not received by Mr. Welles. In the light of subsequent developments, it seems likely that Lombardo and Quintanilla were scheming to bring about a renewal of relations between Mexico and Russia.

In June, 1942 a Russian Military Mission, headed by the Russian Military Attaché in Washington, visited Mexico ostensibly to discuss the production of munitions. It may be assumed that the Russian Military Mission discussed the question of renewing diplomatic relations with the Mexican Government.

On October 28, 1942 the Mexican Foreign Minister announced that the Mexican Government would consider with satisfaction the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, and on November 19 he stated that the Soviet Government had indicated its approval of the resumption of diplomatic relations with Mexico.

The announcement of the renewal of diplomatic relations with Russia was of course greeted enthusiastically by the liberals and leftists, and their warm admiration soon developed into hero-worship as the Red Army continued its stubborn defense of Stalingrad. The conservatives "viewed with alarm" the possibility of Russian intrigue in Mexico while approving in principle the renewal of relations. The arch-conservatives, such as Accion Nacional and the Sinarquistas bitterly denounced this move and charged that Mexico was being turned over to "athiests."

Early in May, 1943, Mr. Lev A. Tarasov, First Secretary of Legation in the Soviet Diplomatic Service arrived in Mexico to negotiate for the purchase of Embassy quarters. At that time it was understood that Mr. Victor Alexeevich Fediuschin would

be the

AIR MAIL

- 3 -

be the Soviet Minister to Mexico. As he was unknown in Mexico, his nomination caused little comment and no reaction. Mr. Tarasov said that he did not know when the new Minister would arrive.

II. APPOINTMENT OF OUMANSKY; HIS ARRIVAL IN MEXICO

On May 18, 1943 it was announced that Mr. Constantin Oumansky had been appointed Minister to Mexico.

The announcement of his appointment caused something of a sensation in Mexico. The leftists hailed it as a recognition of the importance of Mexico in world affairs and as an indication of the active role that the Soviet mission would play in Mexico. The conservatives interpreted it to mean that the Soviet mission would embark on a campaign to "Sovietize" Mexico. They pointed to the fact that Oumansky was formerly Ambassador in Washington as proof that the Soviet Government was sending one of its ranking diplomats to Mexico, a country which has very little legitimate interest for Russia.

On May 22, 1943 only a few days after the announcement of Oumansky's appointment, the Praesidium of the III International announced the dissolution of that organization. This may have been only a coincidence, but some observers in Mexico linked the appointment of Oumansky with the dissolution of the Comintern. Opinions regarding the significance of the dissolution of the Comintern varied from frank disbelief in the sincerity of the move to acceptance of it as a realistic step by Russia to win the confidence of the democracies; however, with the exception of the communists and radical labor groups, political observers in Mexico were inclined to feel that there was some special significance in the appointment of Oumansky rather than of some other person almost simultaneously with the dissolution of the III International. The extreme conservatives in Mexico were frankly horrified, and predicted that Oumansky would arrive with a corps of GPU agents and propaganda experts and start a "Red Revolution" in Mexico and South America.

Mr. Oumansky arrived in Mexico City with his staff on June 17, 1943 and the same day the Mexican Foreign Minister announced that Russia and Mexico had agreed to raise their respective missions to the rank of Embassies. A large demonstration which had been arranged by communists and other radicals was called off by the Government, and the committee to welcome Ambassador Oumansky was reduced to normal proportions.

Oumansky had timed his arrival well: he arrived here on June 17; he called on the Foreign Minister on June 19; and he presented his credentials to President Avila Camacho on June 22, the second anniversary of the German attack on Russia. The exchange of greetings between the President and Ambassador Oumansky contained the usual polite generalities, with nothing worthy of note except the gentle reminder by the President that the Mexican and Russian revolutions resulted from different movements. (Embassy despatch no. 10,950 of June 23, 1943).

(The conservative

AIR MAIL

- 4 -

(The conservative press derived much amusement from the fact that Ambassador Oumansky wore full evening dress when he presented his credentials, although it is customary in Mexico to wear a morning coat or even more informal attire).

On the evening of the same day that he presented his credentials, Ambassador Oumansky appeared at a rally at the Bellas Artes sponsored by the Society of Friends of the Soviet Union, the CTM, the CTAL, and other liberal groups. His appearance brought forth a tremendous ovation. Vicente Lombardo Toledano was the principal speaker. (Embassy despatch No. 10,962 of June 23, 1943.)

III. MAIN LINES OF ACTIVITY

It at once became evident that Oumansky had ambitious plans for his mission to Mexico, and that he had the energy to carry them out. After the presentation of his credentials he immediately proceeded to attend all sorts of functions, social, political, and diplomatic. His command of English and French is excellent, and even his Spanish was fair when he arrived and is now quite good. He likes to make speeches, and as there are many opportunities here for speech-making, he has been able to gratify his desire. What has astonished many people is the variety and scope of his contacts. In addition to the liberal and radical groups, with which he might be expected to have something in common, he has called at the National University, which is strongly conservative, and has addressed the Rotary Club. Some of his appearances are purely for publicity reasons and have no political significance, such as his attendance at the inauguration of a Sanctuary for Pets. His desire for personal popularity is evidenced by his attendance at bull-fights, football games, etc. In fact, he rarely misses an opportunity to appear in public, and, wherever possible, to make a speech.

Viewing his extraordinary activities in retrospect, the following main lines may be discerned.

A. Support of Liberal, Labor and "Revolutionary" Groups.

Ambassador Oumansky has not failed to utilize the friendly attitudes of the PRM, the CTM, the CTAL and other leftist groups to increase both his personal and official prestige. Outwardly, he has been discreet in his relations with such groups, but there is little doubt that he has had private conversations with such key-men as Lombardo Toledano, Alejandro Carrillo, Antonio Villalobos, José Mancisidor, and Narciso Bassols.

On November 8, 1943, Ambassador Oumansky was the guest of honor of the Mexican Congress at a joint session on the occasion of the XXVI anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Oumansky of course made a speech. (Embassy despatch No. 14,119 of November 10, 1943.)

There is also reason to believe that Oumansky is in touch with the extreme leftists among the Spanish Republican refugees, particularly the communists. He is also friendly with the leaders of the Free Germany Group, which is generally considered a pro-communist and pro-Soviet organization.

It is

AIR MAIL

- 5 -

It is known that Ambassador Oumansky has had private conversations with General Lázaro Cárdenas. Naturally, Cárdenas is a man whom Oumansky would wish to cultivate. The nature of the relations between the two men is not definitely known, but the Naval Attaché of this Embassy has reported that Cárdenas is "sympathetic and helpful and has allegedly agreed to assist the Soviet Union 'behind the scenes' in attempting to bring about, once and for all, the end of Conservative or Liberal control of Mexico". This report was evaluated A-3. (N.A. report on 383-43-R, September 24, 1943).

B. Propaganda.

As a former chief of the Tass Agency, Oumansky is an old hand at propaganda, and he put his machine to work almost as soon as he arrived. On July 28, 1943 he exhibited a propaganda film, "The Defence of Stalingrad", at the Foreign Office, and on August 12, 1943 he inaugurated at the Palace of Fine Arts an exhibition of pictures and posters depicting the Russian war effort and Russian life. (Embassy despatch No. 192,272 of August 14, 1943).

He quickly expanded and intensified Soviet propaganda activities. Following are some of the means he has employed.

Radio. In November, 1943 Oumansky arranged for a series of broadcasts over the local radio stations XEFO and XELUZ under the title: "Today on the Soviet Front", based on a daily 500-word cable from the Soviet Union Press Service in Moscow. (Embassy despatch No. 14,646 of December 7, 1943.)

Press. The Tass Agency has two or three men attached to the Soviet Embassy. Press cables are received from the Soviet Union Press in Moscow and used in El Popular, CTM organ, La Voz de Mexico, organ of the Mexican Communist Party, and occasionally by El Nacional, official Government organ, and by the magazine Tiempo.

Motion Pictures. Oumansky has had a theater built in the Embassy where he shows propaganda films to selected groups. It is also understood that he has leased a moving picture theater downtown for the exclusive showing of Russian-made motion pictures. The Soviet Government does not have an extensive motion picture program throughout the Republic such as the one currently sponsored by the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs.

Cultural Relations. - The Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Ruso has recently been inaugurated in Mexico City. The President of this organization is Professor Luis Chávez Orozco, a prominent leftist educator who is Secretary General of the Teachers Syndicate and an official of the Ministry of Education. The vice-presidents are Lic. Alfonso Reyes and Lic. Eduardo Villaseñor. It is interesting to note that Hannes Meyer, who is said to be the secret power behind the Free Germany Movement, is on the board of directors.

The announced

AIR MAIL

- 6 -

The announced program of this Institute is: interchange of scientific information, works of art, publications, cultural films; expositions of Russian and Mexican works of art and science; organization of courses and conferences on cultural themes; provide a collection of photographs and periodicals for journalists, scientists and artists; disseminate through the press of both countries scientific articles, musical compositions and poetic works; publication of scientific and artistic works of both countries; encourage personal contact between artists, scientists and professional men of both countries.

The Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Ruso is in correspondence with the American Russian Institute, 101 Post Street, San Francisco, California.

Publications. The Soviet Embassy publishes a weekly Information Bulletin, containing Russian propaganda and official state documents. Copies of this bulletin are forwarded regularly to the Library of the Department of State. The Comité de Ayuda a Rusia en Guerra also publishes a monthly pamphlet entitled Ayuda a Rusia. This is supposed to be a non-profit private organization of Russian sympathizers.

Meetings and Conferences. The most direct form of propaganda, that of personal contact with the public, is sponsored chiefly by the Sociedad de Amigos de la URSS (Society of Friends of the USSR), an organization which was founded about 1940 by such prominent communist sympathizers as José Mancisidor, Victor Manuel Villaseñor and Nandiso Bassols. This vociferous group has been the spear-head of Soviet propaganda for several years, and since the arrival of the Soviet Ambassador, it has become even more active. Its chief function is to organize rallies and meetings to honor the Soviet Union, at which Ambassador Oumansky is of course the guest of honor. This relieves the Soviet Ambassador of the necessity of organizing such meetings on his own behalf.

In addition to these purely organizational activities, Ambassador Oumansky personally engages in propaganda at every opportunity. As he entertains a great deal, and is a guest at many functions, he has ample opportunity to engage in propaganda, and at this he is indefatigable. Wherever he goes it is his practice to lead some diplomat or government official into a corner and regale him with accounts of Russian victories, or complain about some fancied affront to the Soviet Union.

The main lines of Oumansky's propaganda in Mexico appear to be:

1. To emphasize the fighting qualities of the Red Army and the industrial power of the Soviet system which has supplied it with the sinews of war. In this regard, he is inclined to overlook the material contributions of the United States and Great Britain;

2. To emphasize the hatred which the Russians have for Germany and the Germans. Many persons have commented on the intensity of Oumansky's hatred for the Germans and on the fact that he constantly harps on this theme;

3. To insist

AIR MAIL

- 7 -

3. To insist on the opening of a "second front". On this subject he has been rather indiscreet and sarcastic, although recently he has toned down his comments;

4. To emphasize the paramount role that Russia will play in the post-war era, particularly as a great industrial nation.

C. Promotion of Trade.

As early as August 1943 it was rumored in Mexico City that Oumansky had approached the Mexican Government on the question of oil. He is supposed to have offered, despite his denial, to form a company to exploit Mexico's oil resources. In a communication to the Department dated November 28, 1943 Ambassador Messersmith reported: "I am convinced that Oumansky has been talking about oil here and men like Suárez", in particular, would pay attention to what he says." (°Eduardo Suárez, Mexican Minister of Finance).

Oumansky's overtures on the subject of oil came at a time when the negotiations between the Governments of Mexico and the United States were at a delicate stage, and Oumansky may well have been aware of this fact. On the face of it there is no special reason why Russia, one of the world's great producers of petroleum, should be interested in Mexican petroleum. It is probable that Oumansky brought up the oil question on his own initiative without any instructions from his Government.

In October 1943 Oumansky approached the Mexican Foreign Office with a proposal that Argentine ships be permitted to call at Mexican ports en route to Russia with a cargo of tinned meat. It developed that the Russian proposal included the shipment of Russian agricultural machinery, iron and steel products, in Russian bottoms. So far, the Mexican Government has not evinced any interest in these proposals.

More recently, in March 1944, it was reported to the Department that Oumansky had promised that Russia is in a position to purchase all the silver that Mexico wants to sell, and that Russia will furnish Mexico with railways material and steel. (Letter of March 17, 1944 from Mr. Herbert S. Bursley, Counselor of Embassy, Mexico City, to Mr. Joseph F. McGurk, Department of State).

Oumansky also approached the Mexican authorities with regard to Russian purchases of Yucatan henequen. The Department was obliged to call this to the attention of the Soviet Government, since henequen purchased by the United States in Yucatan is supplied to Russia under Lend-Lease arrangements. The Soviet Government instructed its Embassy in Mexico to cease all discussions of henequen. (Letter of April 12, 1944 from Ambassador Messersmith to Mr. Joseph F. McGurk, Department of State).

It will be seen from these examples that Ambassador Oumansky is eager to promote trade and commerce between Russia and Mexico, but that he apparently has little understanding of international trade or of the basic principles of war-time economics. In every one of the cases cited he intervened in

economic

AIR MAIL

- 8 -

economic situations apparently without having made any study of the circumstances and without any authorization from his Government. It is worth noting too that in every case cited it was plain to anyone that his proposed action would prejudice the legitimate interests of the United States.

Unfortunately, Oumansky does not seem to have learned anything from these experiences. It is understood that he is now holding conversations with the Mexican Foreign Office looking to the conclusion of a commercial agreement between Russia and Mexico. The Foreign Office has not so far indicated any interest in this proposition. (Embassy despatch no. 16938 of April 11, 1944).

IV. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

There have been so many and such fantastic rumors about Oumansky's political activities that it is necessary to take special pains to distinguish between fact and fancy. Mr. Oumansky's background is well known to the Department, so it is unnecessary to discuss it here other than to remark at the outset that his record is one of intrigue and inordinate ambition.

The first known reference to Oumansky in connection with Mexico is contained in the Consulate General's strictly confidential despatch No. 162 of July 25, 1940 (file no. 800-C) which states that the late Leon Trotsky told an officer of this Embassy that "he suspected that the orders for this attempt on his life came through the Soviet Ambassador in Washington, Mr. Oumansky (sic), who according to Trotsky is a GPU agent". The Department will recall that an unsuccessful attempt was made on the life of Leon Trotsky on May 24, 1940 and that he was murdered on August 20, 1940.

There is also a distinct possibility of another previous connection of Oumansky with Mexico, which is that Oumansky may have met Lombardo Toledano sometime during his service in Washington from 1934 to 1941. Lombardo has explicitly stated that he never knew Oumansky before he arrived in Mexico; however, it is known that Lombardo made a number of trips to the United States during the time that Oumansky was in Washington. This is purely speculation, but it is an interesting one. At about that time (probably 1941) Sr. Quintanilla, according to what he told Mr. Bursley, was having back-door conversations with the Soviet Embassy.

The political activities of Ambassador Oumansky in Mexico indicate that his objectives are:

1. To impress upon the Government and the people of Mexico that he is the representative of a great world power;
2. To impress upon the diplomatic representatives of the other American Republics the wisdom of establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union;
3. To foster the development of a pro-Soviet labor group throughout the Continent;

4. To place

AIR MAIL

- 9 -

4. To place Russia in competition with the United States as an important political factor in Latin America;
5. To bring about in Mexico a régime favorable to the Soviet Union and to communist principles.

The methods and procedures adopted by the Soviet Ambassador to achieve his objectives are somewhat unorthodox for a diplomat, and in some instances reveal a lack of understanding of Latin American psychology.

He has set out to achieve Points 1 and 2 by the simple expedients of spending large sums of money, maintaining a sumptuous Embassy, and talking in a confident and sometimes arrogant manner of Russia's accomplishments and Russia's capacities and abilities for future achievements.

With regard to Point 3, the available evidence tends to show that Oumansky has been using Vicente Lombardo Toledano as his advocate in this undertaking. One of the most interesting documents that has come to light on this subject is the secret report of statements alleged to have been made by Lombardo in Montevideo which was transmitted with despatch No. 4185 of April 8, 1944 (file No. 550.4) from the American Ambassador at Montevideo. According to enclosure No. 2 to this despatch, Lombardo Toledano says that the III International was abolished because it did not meet contemporary needs, and that its place will be taken by the "International Obrera" (Labor International). "The Red International will continue to live in the new organization decreed by the Party, but its procedures, its directors, its systems of action, all shall be changed", said Lombardo. After describing the organization by countries and regions, Lombardo says: "The regional centrals shall establish contact with the Soviet diplomatic representation."

If this document is authentic, then there can be no doubt that Lombardo is actively endeavoring to consolidate Latin American labor groups into a master organization which will be under the control of the Bolshevik régime, and under the immediate direction of Ambassador Oumansky. The CTAL may form the nucleus of such an organization.

But even if the Montevideo reports of Lombardo's statements are not authentic, there is an abundance of evidence to indicate that Lombardo is making a determined effort to gain control of Latin-American labor in the interests of Marxist communism. In this connection reference is made to a secret report on Lombardo which was forwarded to the Department with a letter dated April 17, 1943 from Mr. Bursley to Mr. Bonsal, and to a secret report on Lombardo transmitted with the Embassy's despatch No. 15,251 of January 10, 1944, file No. 850.4. Both these documents relate to Lombardo's intrigues, and the latter emphasizes the scheme of Oumansky and Lombardo to achieve the triumph of Bolshevism over Anglo-Saxon influence in Latin America.

The method that is apparently being employed now to achieve these ends is what may be termed the "national unity" policy.

Both Lombardo

AIR MAIL

- 10 -

Both Lombardo and his first lieutenant, Alejandro Carrillo, have recently called upon the proletariat to unite with other sectors of the public for national unity to win the war against the Axis as soon as possible. Under this policy, labor will not strike for the duration of the war, and thus it will "lull" capitalism into a state of false security. Six months or a year after the end of hostilities, labor will "take over" all capitalistic government by the simple expedient of a world-wide strike.

Some steps along this line have already been taken in Mexico. The Embassy reported in despatch No. 16,828 of April 5, 1944 a change in the editorial policy of the leading labor newspaper, El Popular, and it also reported a change in Communist policy in the same direction in despatch No. 16,829 of April 5, 1944. Lombardo also made an important address calling for national unity, which was reported in despatch No. 16,994 of April 14, 1944.

A further and more significant step in this program was to have been accomplished by the holding of a World Labor Conference in London in June, 1944. This meeting has been cancelled because of war-time conditions. It is now being rumored that the World Labor Conference will be held in Toronto or in Mexico City.

In passing, it may be mentioned that it will be interesting to learn what Lombardo Toledano achieves in the current session of the International Labor Organization in Philadelphia.

As to Point 4, it is reported that Oumansky has gone to considerable lengths to impress upon the Government and the people of Mexico that Russia is a strong nation, and will be one of the Great Powers of the world in the future, and that consequently Mexico need not submit to United States domination since it can have Russia as a friend, which will protect Mexico from the United States. To this end, Oumansky has made all sorts of extravagant statements about Russian production of petroleum, iron and steel, agricultural machinery, railway equipment, and he indicates that Russia will be able to undersell the United States.

At the same time, he stresses the affinity of the Russian and Mexican "revolutions", and the identity of interests of the masses in Russia and the masses in Latin America. The implication always is that the Anglo-Saxon and the Latin have nothing in common spiritually or intellectually, whereas the Russians share the same ideals. It is interesting to note in this connection that Ambassador Oumansky attended a Catholic service at the Church of our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City on November 15, 1943 in honor of the Royal Family of Belgium. An officer of this Embassy who was present at the service observed that Oumansky was the only Ambassador in attendance. Oumansky also was present at a banquet on the same day given by the Belgian Minister, and as he was the only Ambassador present he made the principal address. Significantly, he eulogized the Belgian clergy. (Letter of Mr. Bursley to Mr. John Willard Carrigan, Department of State, November 15, 1943.)

Ambassador

AIR MAIL

- 11 -

Ambassador Oumansky has not always been discreet in his references to the United States and to American foreign policy. Several reports have reached this Embassy from reliable sources which indicate that Oumansky has made disparaging remarks regarding the United States and particularly concerning our war effort. He also is especially critical of the British. Reports received here indicate that Oumansky is particularly outspoken in the presence of Latin American diplomats. It is almost incredible that he does not seem to believe that we have any true friends among these people and that his remarks will get back to us.

With respect to Point 5 - the bringing about in Mexico of a régime favorable to the Soviet Union and communist principles - there exists much speculation. Were this true, it would of course constitute an unwarranted interference in the domestic affairs of Mexico and would justify Mexico in demanding his recall.

There is no proof that Oumansky is trying to influence Mexican internal policies, but there is evidence to indicate that he is taking more than usual interest in Mexican politics. For instance, it is reported that he frequently has private conversations with General Lázaro Cárdenas, Minister of National Defense. There is, of course, no reason why Oumansky should not see General Cárdenas, but as there are obviously only a very limited number of official matters which he could properly discuss with General Cárdenas, the natural inference is that Oumansky is talking politics with Cárdenas. The Department is fully familiar with General Cárdenas' political beliefs, and will appreciate that any political discussion between these two men bodes no good for the United States.

It should also be noted that the Foreign Minister, Dr. Padilla, has on a number of occasions expressed to Ambassador Messersmith his anxiety and concern over Oumansky's activities. It must be assumed that the Foreign Minister has good reasons for his concern and anxiety. Note should also be made of the rumor that the new Undersecretary of Foreign Relations, Lic. Vicente Santos Guajardo, was put in that post through the influence of Ambassador Oumansky. This rumor is almost fantastic, but even if true Oumansky has gained little, since Santos Guajardo has shown no ability in his present position and is considered a non-entity by the professional personnel of the Foreign Office. There was also a rumor that José Rubén Romero, Mexican Ambassador to Cuba, and recently Rector of the University of Morelia, would succeed Dr. Padilla as Foreign Minister. It is known that Rubén Romero and Oumansky are friendly, and that they had a long conversation with General Cárdenas in October, 1943, which was not long before the appointment of Santos Guajardo as Undersecretary of Foreign Relations to succeed Torres Bodet. It is conceded generally that Santos Guajardo is a "Cárdenas" man.

Whether Oumansky is interested in Mexican internal affairs or not, there certainly is a strong feeling on the part of some people here that he is. Of course these people are his enemies, and some of them would go to any lengths to discredit him and

the Government

AIR MAIL

- 12 -

the Government he represents. For example, it will be recalled that Oumansky has been linked by rumor with the attempted assassination of the President. This charge seems incredible and fantastic, but is the result not only of the bitter hatred of his enemies, but also of his reputation and of his unorthodox activities.

The popular belief that Oumansky is engaging in improper activities in Mexico is well illustrated by an incident that took place in March of this year. Several of the more conservative newspapers and magazines had been quite outspoken in their criticisms of Oumansky, and took great satisfaction in publishing rumors and gossip about him, as well as unflattering caricatures. Evidently this got under his skin, for on April 1, 1944 the Ministry of Gobernación issued an official statement admonishing the press against criticizing the representatives of friendly powers, and specifically mentioning the case of the Russian Ambassador. (Embassy despatch No. 16,788 of April 1, 1944.)

As to his relations with President Avila Camacho, little is known. The President is very discreet in his dealings with the Diplomatic Corps, and is careful not to show any favoritism. The President is a Catholic and a moderate conservative, and has never shown any sympathy for communism. As the President is personally modest and retiring, it is not likely that he would be attracted by Oumansky personally, who is anything but modest and retiring. The President is, of course, a realist, as was shown by his action in renewing diplomatic relations with Russia, and will no doubt continue to treat with Russia on a realistic basis, but there is no ground for believing that Oumansky has made any headway in winning the President over to his views.

Despite the lack of concrete proof that Oumansky is intervening in domestic politics, it would be unwise to discount this possibility, and the Embassy will therefore continue to watch this situation carefully.

V. THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN MEXICO

As there have been many wild rumors concerning the size and activities of the Soviet Embassy in Mexico, it may be worthwhile here to report the known facts on the subject.

The staff of the Soviet Embassy in Mexico at the present time (May, 1944) according to the official records of the Chief of Protocol of the Mexican Foreign Office consists of the following persons:

Mr. Constantin Oumansky, Ambassador Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary
Mrs. Oumansky

Mr. Vasil Yakubovsky, Counselor of Embassy
Mrs. Yakubovsky

Mr. Lev A. Tarasov, First Secretary
Mrs. Tarasov

AIR MAIL

- 13 -

Mr. Andrei N. Glebsky, First Secretary
Mrs. Glebsky

Mr. Alexander P. Malkov, Commercial Attaché
Mrs. Malkov

Mr. Pavel O. Proshin, Attaché
Mrs. Proshin

Miss Alexandra A. Nikolskaya, Attaché

It will be seen that in addition to the Ambassador there are six diplomatic officers on the staff of the Soviet Embassy.

The exact number of clerks, stenographers and other personnel employed by the Soviet Embassy is not known, but it is not believed that it is out of proportion to the number of Officers. As the Chancery and Residence are combined, there are a number of employees who double as personal servants and as Embassy employees.

There are no Soviet consular offices in Mexico.

The Soviet Embassy and Chancery are quartered in a large residence known as the Casa de la Condesa on the Calzada de Tacubaya. It is generally understood that this property was purchased by the Russian Government for approximately \$100,000.

From July, 1943 to March, 1944 the Soviet Embassy disbursed approximately 1,500,000 pesos (or slightly over \$300,000) from its account with a Mexican bank. If this figure includes the purchase of the Embassy property, the balance does not seem excessively large for the maintenance of a large Embassy, salaries and wages, running expenses and incidentals, and does not leave much for the financing of "espionage" and other improper activities of which Oumansky has been accused. Of course, it is not known whether this bank account is the only account that Ambassador Oumansky carries, or whether he has other sources of funds, although the banking house with which he deals thinks that it is handling all his business. (Letter of March 16, 1944 from Mr. Bursley, to Mr. James H. Wright, Department of State.)

Ambassador Oumansky runs his Embassy on a rigid basis. Two diplomatic secretaries, Messrs. Yatskevich and Kostyaguin, and one of the Tass representatives, Mr. Potemkin, have returned to Russia recently, and at least in the case of Mr. Yatskevich, there is good reason to believe that his transfer was due to improper conduct. Mrs. Oumansky was heard to remark at a diplomatic reception, after inquiring the identity of the wife of a certain foreign diplomat, that: "If she were in our Embassy we would send her home." It has also been noted that at receptions, and even small dinners in his Embassy, Ambassador Oumansky is in the habit of ordering his Counselor to bring him a glass of water, or perform some other menial task. This does not bear out the common rumor that the Counselor of the Soviet Embassy is always a GPU (NVDP) agent, who is put there to spy and report on the Ambassador. In this case it is

possible

AIR MAIL

- 14 -

possible that Oumansky is the GPU agent. Mr. Oumansky recently told Mr. Bursley that his Counselor was very able but too shy.

Ambassador Oumansky entertains frequently and lavishly. On Russian holidays, such as the anniversary of the Red Revolution or the creation of the Red Army, Oumansky gives a reception for a thousand or more persons, at which there is an abundance of caviar, vodka, Scotch whisky, and other reputed delicacies. At dinner parties, he usually serves champagne. The atmosphere of his Embassy, in the way of formal attire, protocol, etc., is possibly more formal than in any other Embassy in Mexico. On one occasion, Oumansky noticed an uninvited guest, and a secretary forthwith escorted the interloper to the door. On another occasion, two uninvited guests were taken to the nearest police station by one of the secretaries, and charged with illegal entry.

Mrs. Oumansky is a kindly woman, and is very friendly with Americans. She takes an active part in diplomatic and social circles, and has made many friends. Mrs. Oumansky is a very intelligent woman and it is probable that her moderate views exercise a restraining influence on her husband. Shortly before her departure from Moscow for Mexico, her only child, a young girl, fell down stairs and was killed. When Mrs. Oumansky arrived here she was suffering from a profound depression, and her husband despaired of her health. While she has shown some improvement, the effects of the shock are still apparent.

The secretaries on Oumansky's staff are all personally agreeable and pleasant, and are ardently patriotic. It is not believed, however, that they share to any appreciable degree in the responsibilities of the Mission.

In diplomatic and official circles, the Soviet Embassy is still looked upon as something of a novelty. Curiosity, more than anything else, prompts many people to attend Soviet Embassy functions, plus the hope that Oumansky will do or say something unusual.

In brief, the Soviet Embassy here is generally viewed with interest and curiosity, but with suspicion.

VI. CONCLUSIONS.

Ambassador Oumansky has unquestionably succeeded in attracting attention to himself and to the Soviet Union. In this sense he has probably increased the prestige of Russia in the eyes of the Mexican people. However, it is believed that he has conspicuously failed to win the confidence and respect of the Mexican Government. High government officials, including Cabinet Ministers, have frequently expressed to officers of this Embassy their anxiety and concern over Oumansky's activities. There are, of course, some Mexican officials who are friendly and sympathetic to Oumansky, but the official attitude of the Government is one of suspicion of Oumansky personally.

As the

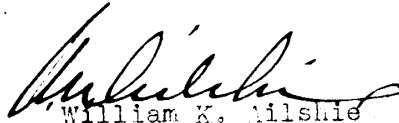
AIR MAIL

- 15 -

As the Department is aware, the latest rumor about Oumansky is that he was involved in the attempted assassination of President Avila Camacho. Regardless of the truth or falsity of such charges, it is nevertheless obvious that Oumansky does not enjoy the confidence here that a diplomatic representative ordinarily should command. In view of all the circumstances, the question arises whether Oumansky's excessive and sometimes unwise activities have contributed to Russia's cause in Mexico. Oumansky is undoubtedly clever, and has probably had much experience in extricating himself from difficult situations, but he is now faced with a serious problem. His reputation is such that he is now blamed for almost everything that goes wrong in Mexico, including even the railway strikes. Whether his usefulness will continue depends on future developments.

Respectfully yours,

For the Ambassador

William K. Milshie
Second Secretary of Embassy800
WKM:jc

In ozulid to the Department